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S E C R E T PARIS 000383

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/04/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [FR](#) [AF](#) [GG](#) [UK](#)
SUBJECT: FRANCE: ONE MONTH FROM NATO SUMMIT IN BUCHAREST

REF: A. PARIS 338
[1](#)B. PARIS 305
[1](#)C. IIR 6 832 0389 08
[1](#)D. SARKOZY-POTUS LETTER

Classified By: DCM Mark A. Pekala, for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. Summary. (C) With the NATO summit in Bucharest only a month away, the French are solidifying their positions and anxious to find consensus on the key issues on the agenda: NATO enlargement, missile defense and Afghanistan. GOF officials believe that the Bucharest summit, President Sarkozy's first, will best show success by demonstrating strong unity among the members of the alliance. On these grounds, they want to avoid overly "divisive" positions that will split the alliance. On enlargement, the French are open to admitting any, or all, of the three Adriatic countries (although they remain resistant to pressuring Greece on the name issue with Macedonia). They want to send a "positive signal" -- but short of a MAP -- to Georgia and Ukraine. On French rapprochement to NATO, we expect President Sarkozy to make a positive statement at Bucharest, targeting next year's 60th anniversary summit as the deadline to complete French reintegration. GOF officials express optimism that we can find consensus on missile defense language for Bucharest, but remain wary of a specific endorsement that pre-judges whether NATO needs such a system. They want to get the debate out of the EWG-R report and negotiated at a higher political level. Finally, the French military has presented to the Elysee two main options for bolstering French troop deployments in Afghanistan -- the preferred option would base troops in RC-East but a second option allows for a deployment to the south -- and they are now awaiting a political decision by President Sarkozy. Embassy believes that there are two principal areas of divergence between the United States and France. First, on missile defense it will take some concerted, high-level interaction in the next few weeks to assure a strong MD statement at Bucharest. Second, a USG decision in favor of MAP for Georgia and Ukraine would likely face strong resistance here (as we understand that President Sarkozy himself is opposed) and would again require a significant push before Bucharest. End summary.

NEW NATO MEMBERS: GOF HAPPY WITH 1, 2 or 3

[1](#)2. (C) French government officials have expressed a solid uniformity of message on the issue of NATO enlargement in all of our meetings. France is prepared to see an enlargement of one, two or three of the Adriatic members, with Croatia

presenting the best case for admission and Macedonia and Albania further behind, but acceptable to the GOF. That said, in a recent meeting with Philippe Carre, A/S-equivalent for Strategic Affairs at the MFA, he noted that France is not willing to pressure Greece on the name issue with Macedonia; at most they will encourage the two sides to find a compromise. Philippe Errera, Strategic Affairs Advisor to FM Kouchner, agreed, noting that forcing Greece to a compromise will be counterproductive, as the GOG will have to present the admission of the new members to its parliament for ratification, so a final decision must be broadly politically acceptable in Greece.

POSITIVE SIGNAL FOR UKRAINE OR GEORGIA

¶3. (C) French officials are also uniformly opposed to extending a Membership Action Plan to Georgia or Ukraine, citing such a move as "premature." According to Damien Loras, Advisor to President Sarkozy for Ukraine (as well as Russia, Central Asia, the Balkans and the Americas), the French President informed Ukrainian President Yushchenko during his visit to Paris on February 20 (ref A) that France does not support MAP for Ukraine at this time. However, the GOF still wants to send a "positive signal" at Bucharest, to acknowledge progress made by the two countries and to affirm Georgian and Ukrainian aspirations towards Euro-atlantic structures. Loras stated that the French position is shared by Germany and the UK (which German and British diplomatic colleagues in Paris have confirmed, albeit with one UK diplomat noting that while HMG was comfortable with the French position, it would possibly be willing to go further towards MAP if pushed by the USG.) In a recent discussion, Philippe Errera stated his view that a signal towards Georgia and Ukraine could be effected in a way to show Russia that it does not have a veto over NATO members and even said that the GOF would consider a "Georgia Action Plan" or other similar step (while still avoiding the word "Membership"). According to Errera, additional efforts to agree on MAP for Georgia and Ukraine are simply too divisive among the members of the alliance to find consensus at Bucharest.

COMPROMISE ON MISSILE DEFENSE

¶4. (S) While the French position on missile defense converges with the U.S. on a number of points, there still remain a couple points of significant difference. Specifically, the French oppose references to the necessity of covering all allies or to a NATO "acquisition" of a missile defense system. At a February 29 meeting with Carre, he stated that SecDef Gates' proposal on missile defense at Vilnius was a good basis for discussion. He reiterated that the main elements of agreement between the U.S. and France are: 1) that the threat posed is real; 2) that the U.S. missile defense system is one response to this threat; and 3) that the U.S. system contributes to security in this area. To this, it may be possible to add a reference to Russian cooperation. However, he cited as "premature" any language attempting to organize a NATO-wide system or making reference to the "possible acquisition" of such a system.

¶5. (S) The GOF remains concerned that any text stating that all allies should be covered on the basis of "indivisibility of security" pre-judges a NATO decision and implies collective financing of such a system. Finally, Carre said the GOF objective is to find consensus language on this subject for Bucharest; the French do not believe it is possible for the elements of a declaration for Bucharest to be resolved in the EWG-R report at NATO. Both he and Philippe Errera have suggested that a compromise will have to be worked out at a higher political level (ref B). (Embassy comment: Part of the problem is timing, as the Bucharest summit comes before the completion of the French "white paper" on defense and security priorities for the future. French officials are hesitant to lock themselves into

anything with large strategic, operational and budgetary impact until their review process is complete. That said, the French President has considerable power to shape the report's conclusions and, in fact, has already taken some preliminary decisions that the white paper experts must now incorporate into their final product. We have no reason to believe that Sarkozy could not do the same on this issue).

TWO MILITARY OPTIONS FOR AFGHANISTAN

¶6. (S) Lt. Gen. Benoit Puga (J-3) recently informed the Paris DAO (ref C) that the military had completed planning for two scenarios for Afghanistan and had presented the options to the Elysee for President Sarkozy to make a final decision. The preferred military option envisages a move of the maneuver battalion now in Kabul to the east where French forces can still benefit from being close to their logistics base, engage in the fight against Al-Qaida, and concentrate their troops close to their nearby OMLT's in Wardak and Logar. The second option is a move to the south where they would take over a sector near Kandahar. In both options, the re-deployment of Special Forces troops and possible deployment of a second maneuver battalion are also envisaged as a way to augment the French contribution. At this time, there is a concerted push among RC-South allies (including this week's visit of the Canadian CHOD and the Dutch PM) to argue for a French strategic move to the south. Whatever the final decision, French forces will stay together -- any troop move will be a package deal that concentrates French forces in one area and avoids "piecemeal" deployments such as the decision last year to send a single French OMLT to the Dutch sector.

¶7. (C) The recent letter sent by President Sarkozy to all NATO allies (ref D) delivered a strong message of support for NATO efforts in Afghanistan and referred to four specific criteria that should be fulfilled at Bucharest to ensure success in this mission: 1) a reaffirmation of Alliance commitment to Afghanistan; 2) the necessity of coordination among the multiple actors and the importance of naming of a new UN High Representative to fill this post; 3) increased efforts in training for Afghan security forces to assist their eventual assumption of security responsibilities; and 4) adoption of a shared political strategy, to include Pakistan. To this, he added the willingness of France to reinforce its military presence and to deploy in a new (unidentified) zone. These actions give credence to our hopes that France will both increase its deployments and move its forces out of their current base in Kabul. It will be crucial in the next few weeks for the U.S. to send a strong, unified message if we hope to influence the French president to shift forces to the south (or alternatively, if we accept a move to the east that will, in the words of Sarkozy's diplomatic advisor Jean-David Levitte, "allow for a rotation of other forces" that could then bolster allied troops in the south).

RE-POSITIONING FRANCE IN NATO

¶8. (C) Finally, we understand from the Elysee that President Sarkozy intends to make a positive statement at Bucharest in favor of re-integrating France into the military structures of NATO (what our French contacts refer to as "normalization" or "renewing" of the French-NATO relationship). Sarkozy will likely pair this goal, as he has in past speeches, with the corresponding need to strengthen European defense structures. Various contacts have informed us that the GOF is targeting the 60th anniversary NATO summit next year as a deadline to fully announce this "deliverable."

COMMENT

19. (S) Comment. France agrees with many U.S. positions we seek to have endorsed at Bucharest. French decision-making on Afghanistan is continuing to trend in a positive direction, with increased commitments (both military and political) to the ISAF mission. Now is our opportunity to influence Sarkozy's final decision on the geographic location (east or south). The GOF appears willing to support a robust NATO enlargement including all three current candidates, but officials are flatly opposed, at all levels and in all the relevant ministries, to extending MAP to Georgia or Ukraine. That said, they appear willing to go to great lengths to find a compromise giving a positive signal to the two countries and reinforcing the message to Russia that it has no veto over NATO membership. On missile defense, a divergence remains between our two positions and will require a significant push -- at a political rather than working level -- to find compromise language. Post recommends increased senior-level engagement if we want a strong missile defense statement at Bucharest. On all these issues, we cannot exclude the possibility that, in the end, Sarkozy will overrule his bureaucracy in our favor. End Comment.

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